

THE WAR YEARS

never ran dry And it was not mere ingenuity
Always he
was practical, realist, on the spot, concerned
with some
authentic matter of day to day hardship or
approaching
senuousness, never merely ingenious

The Committee did substantial \vork While
loyally
leaving purely Trade Union matters to the
Trade Unions, it
covered the whole range of domestic
experiences during the
war, from rents and pnces to pensions and
allowances Very
early, for example, it got on to the glaring
scandal of Govern-
ment contracts, and demanded their public,
not private
allocation Its exposure of the appalling
profiteering con-
nected with the erection of Kitchener Army
Huts—where
the Government was being charged at the rate
of between
^130-^150 for wretched, insanitary and
waterlogged struc-
tures that cost something between £10 and
£14 to erect—
was only one instance among many of the way
in which it
looked after the general interest as no other
group was able
to do, owing to the combined operation of the
Suspension of
Trade Union conditions and the political
truce

The Committee was useful to the workers,
Unionist
and non-Unionist alike, since it was an
effective watch-
dog for their protection, as of that of the
citizen
generally Its Minutes, circulated to local
Labour Parties
and Trade Councils, were always rich in
practical sense and
shrewd foresight to meet issues as, or before,
they arose
Webb was tireless, in this nothing escaped
him Quite
early in 1915 the Committee was pressing for
Government

action on the following suggestive list of points
—

Labour representation of all committees,
national or local

Adequate provision for soldiers and sailors and
their dependents
including unmarried wives and mothers—through
State and not
voluntary machinery

Their pressure for a decent scale for the
families of the men
at the front was incessant, and though they
never succeeded